

Message Text

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51

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-07 NSCE-00 PRS-01 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SP-03 DRC-01 /048 W

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R 261125Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6216

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 2989

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AR

SUBJ: COMMENTATOR REQUESTS GOA ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING
APPOINTMENT WITH CASTRO

1. NORTH AMERICAN DESK OFFICIAL AT FONOFF ON INFORMAL AND
CONFIDENTIAL BASIS, HAS INFORMED EMBASSY THAT AMBASSADOR
ORFILA HAS RECEIVED TELEGRAPHIC REQUEST FROM WALTER CRONKITE
THAT HE USE HIS GOOD OFFICES IN ARRANGING INTERVIEW FOR
CRONKITE WITH FIDEL CASTRO.

2. FONOFF IS LEERY OF PROPOSAL. WHILE RECENT GOA INITIATIVES
ON CUBA MIGHT SUGGEST GOA AS USEFUL CHANNEL TO CASTRO,
FONOFF DISCLAIMS ANY DESIRE TO SERVE AS MEDIATOR BETWEEN CASTRO
AND USG AND IS AT LOSS TO UNDERSTAND WHY CRONKITE, WITH ALL OF
CONTRACTS AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO HIM AND CBS, SHOULD
CHOOSE TO INVOLVE GOA IN ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH CASTRO.
CRONKITE WAS DESCRIBED AS FRIEND OF ORFILA OF LONG STANDING.
FONOFF APPREHENSIVE THAT CASTRO, IN HIS UNPREDICTABILITY,
MIGHT USE INTERVIEW AS FORUM FOR ONE OF HIS USUAL ATTACKS ON
USG OR ON PRESIDENT NIXON PERSONALLY.

3. IN THIS SITUATION, FONOFF HAS ASKED EMBASSY TO INFORM
DEPARTMENT IN CONFIDENCE OF CRONKITE'S APPROACH AND TO ASCERTAIN
USG'S VIEWS BEFORE MATTER IS RAISED FOR DECISION TO HIGHER
LEVELS IN GOA. FONOFF WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO AUTHORIZE
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ANY MOVE IN THIS MATTER WHICH MIGHT DISTURB RELATIONS WITH USG.

MEANWHILE, ORFILA HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO ATTEMPT TO CLARIFY
MOTIVES FOR REQUEST.

4. COMMENT: EMBASSY SHARES FONOFF'S INABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
WHY CRONKITE SHOULD CHOOSE GOA AS CHANNEL TO CASTRO. IT WOULD
SEEM RELATIVELY SIMPLE FOR CRONKITE TO MAKE REQUEST DIRECTLY
OF FONMIN ROA OR OTHER CUBAN OFFICIAL IN NEW YORK, UNLESS
HE FEELS CASTRO LESS LIKELY TO TURN DOWN REQUEST BACKED BY
GOA. HOWEVER, WE SENSE FONOFF AT LEAST WOULD JUST AS SOON
HAVE GOA PLAY NO ROLE IN MATTER. EMBASSY IS ALSO RELUCTANT
TO ENDORSE THIS SCHEME AND REQUESTS INSTRUCTIONS ON REPLY TO
BE MADE TO FONOFF'S INFORMAL QUERY.
HILL

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